MAN RAY

PHOTO GRAPHY IS NOT ART

12 PHOTOGRAPHS

INTRODUCED BY ANDRÉ BRETON

Translated by

Karl Orend

EDITIONS CARREFOUR ALYSCAMPS

TORONTO, CANADA

MAN RAY

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GLM 1937

convultionaries

MEN :

I would like to be a little
alcove mouse

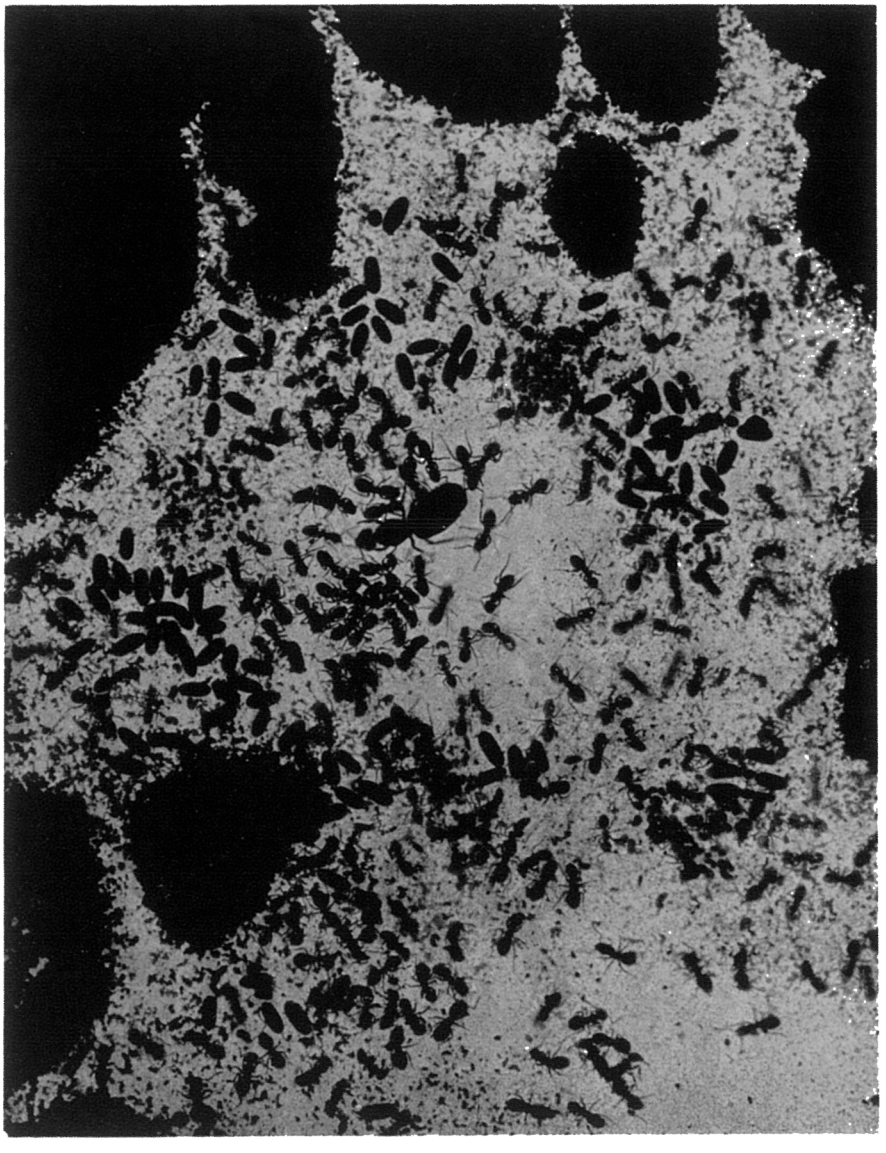
- I would like to create, for myself alone, living creatures, even with the complicity of storms.
- Let the wind drop when I try to steer my dreams.
- Let my presence be felt in several places at once.

- I would like to change my sex as easily as my shirt.
- Let me walk freely on other planets.
- And live the life of a bird, of a tree, of a stone, for as long as I remember.
- I would like to find and lose the philosopher's stone.
- Make love unceasingly.
- Remove with impunity a large number of people.
- After which, resuscitate a very small number of the dead.

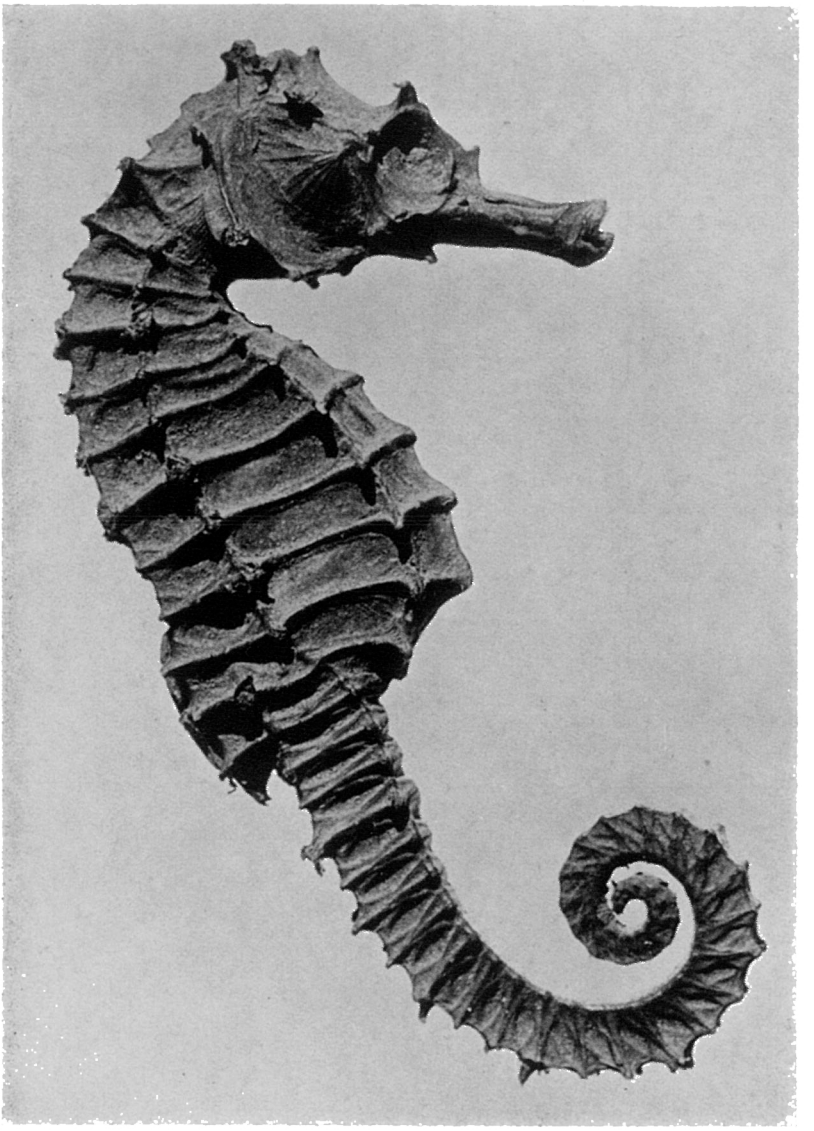
WOMAN :

Seduce the whole world like the first ray of Sun! But only if I don't grow old.

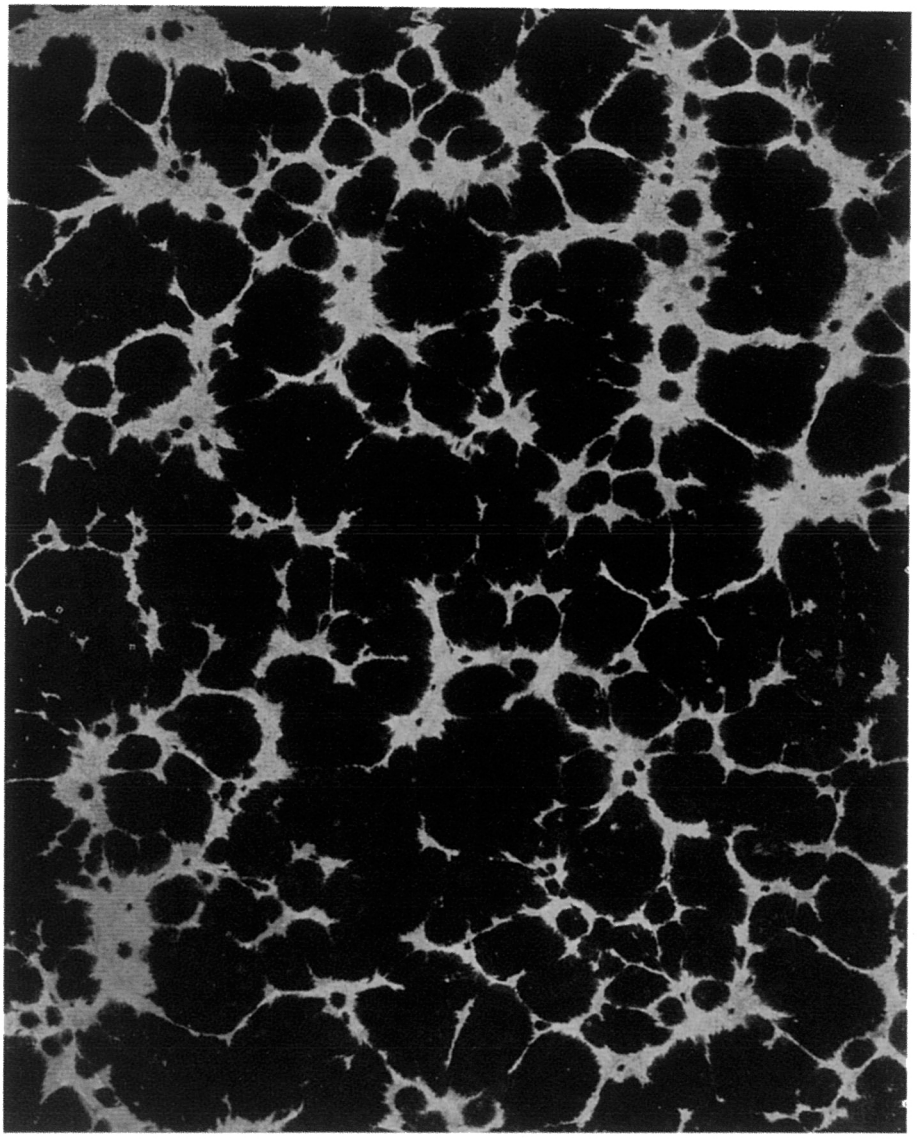
But, here is Man Ray. HERE IS THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC LANTERN BRAIN.



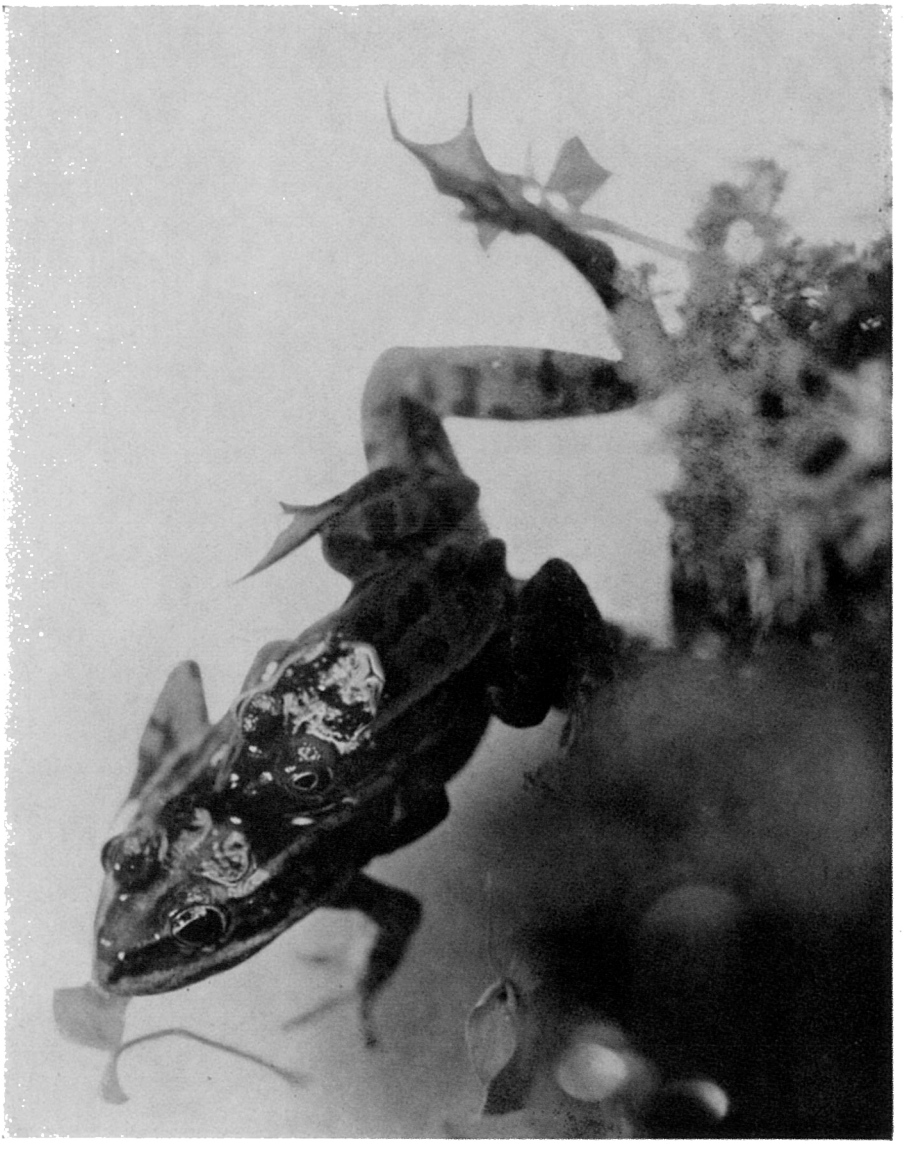
Well-ordered brain



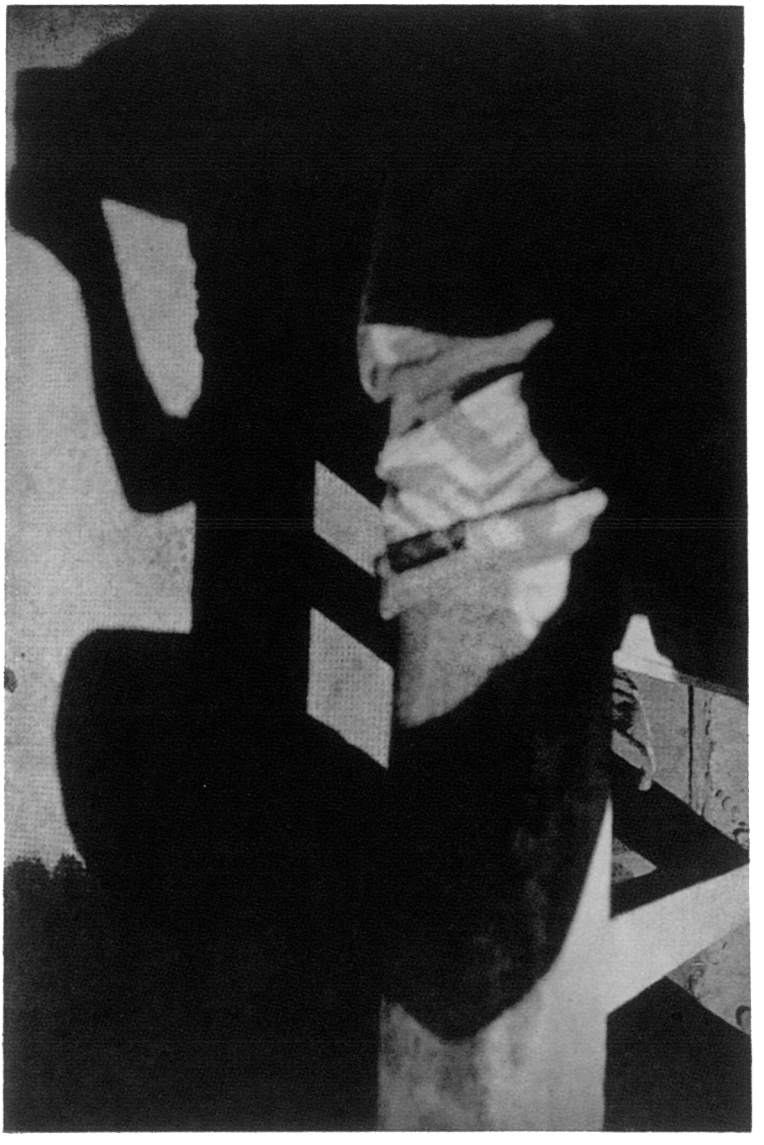
Natural history



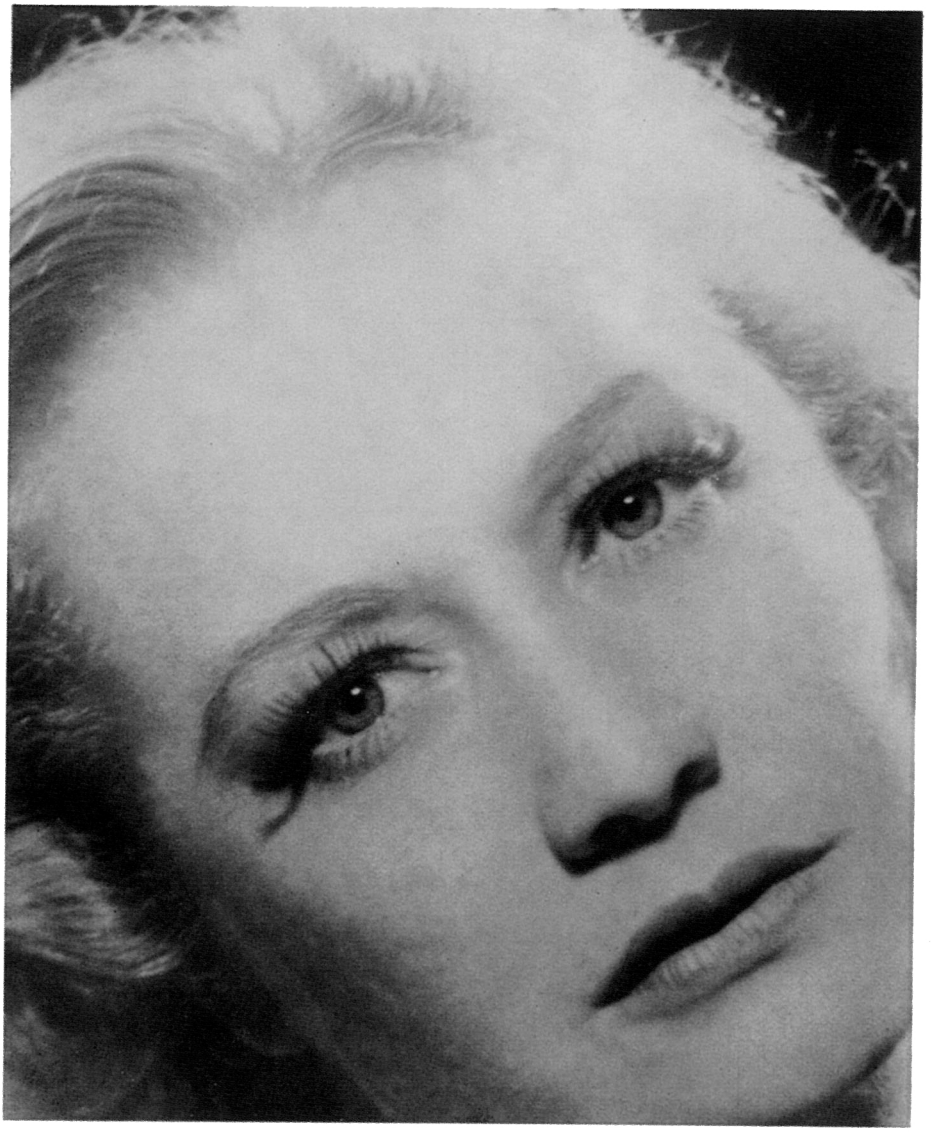
Cover of a notebook bought from a beggar



When nature creates machines

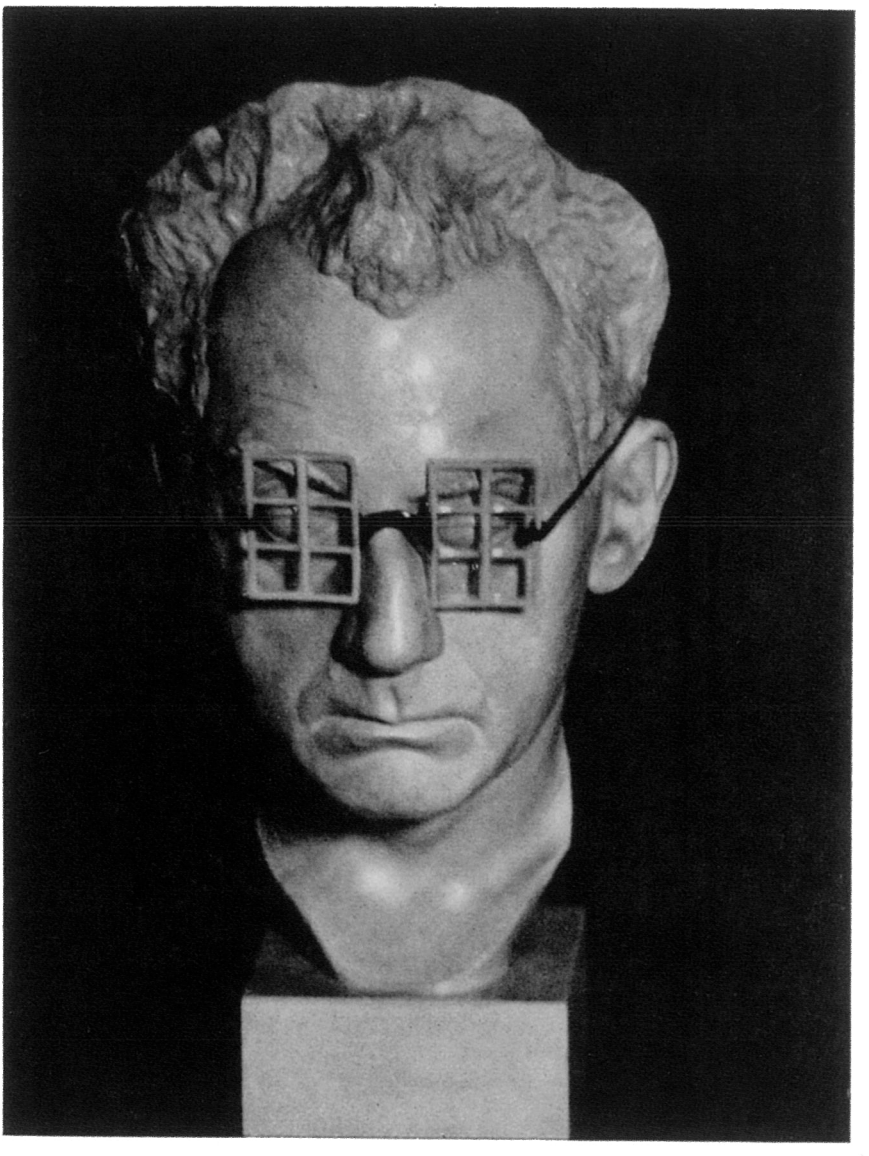


Transition between two shots

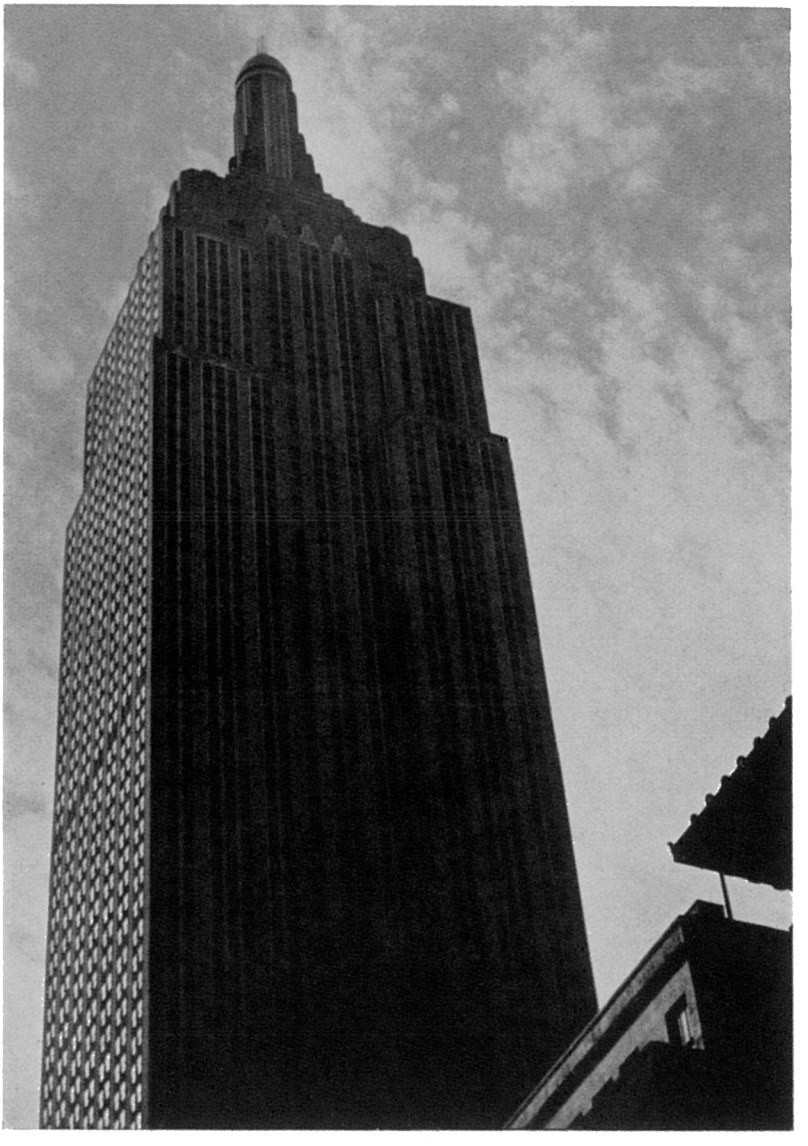


Myriam Hopkins

Unaltered photo and one hundred percent automatic



Through the eyes of others



Utilitarian void

"Winter collection" fashion photo

Sex appeal

Artstic open air

Afterword

Man Ray's *Photographie N'est Pas L'Art*, with an Introduction by André Breton, was first published by Guy Lévis Mano at Éditions G.L.M., 6 rue Huyghens in Paris, on May 13th 1937. It was issued as a 25.2cmX16.3cm portfolio, set by hand in *Plantin Romain* by the publisher. The pages were unbound, un-numbered sheets enclosed in a protective black sleeve with a *rabat*. A cover in dark blue showed through a window in the sleeve. The number of copies printed is unknown. Eight of these photographs had previously appeared in the third volume of Guy Lévis Mano's literary journal *Cahiers G.L.M.* (without Breton's text) in June 1936. Guy Lévis Mano was the primary publisher of Surrealist works between 1935-39. He issued many of the movement's seminal texts, and brought about collaborations between the leading Surrealist writers and artists who are now seen as towering figures in twentieth century art. Lévis Mano was himself a poet and important translator. Although he is unknown in the Anglophone world, Lévis Mano was one of the great publishers of his century in France, and also a legendary

typographer and book designer, who was often treated by his famous authors and illustrators as an equal collaborator on their books - for example on the *livre d'artiste* entitled *Facile*, by Paul Éluard and Man Ray (1935).

Man Ray began his creative experiments away from painting and sculpture with the cameraless photography of his Rayographs in Paris in 1921-2. This led to his portfolio *Champs délicieux*, in 1922. He would eventually become known as one of the major artistic, portrait, fashion and commercial photographers of the twentieth century.

Photography was, by the late 1920s, with the arrival of film cameras and more accessible and mobile camera technology, central to the artistic, publishing and commercial spheres. It was also becoming available to the general public. Some whom we now think of primarily as photographers did not begin that way. Brassaï, for example, began as a journalist and visual artist, and turned to the camera, taught by his fellow Hungarian André Kertész, so that he would not have the added expense of paying a photographer to accompany

him when he undertook journalistic assignments. Because of the newness of the medium as something accessible to all, the theory of what exactly photography was was still up for debate. It was, however one chose to define it, central to the Surrealist movement, with which Man Ray was associated. Photographs illustrated their books and journals, and recorded important events in their movement's trajectory, such as the famous visit to St. Julien le Pauvre, and the first reading by teenage prodigy Gisèle Prassinos. Photographs were also incorporated into their collages, and provided inspiration for their paintings. Although Man Ray made moving pictures at various times, it would be his brilliantly constructed stills which made his name and reputation internationally.

In the year 1929, when Man Ray was working on a variety of photographic projects, including his clandestine erotic collaboration entitled *1929*, with Louis Aragon and Benjamin Péret, an article appeared in the journal *L'Art vivant* asking the question "is photography art ?" Man Ray side-stepped the question, stating instead :

"Is photography an art ? There's no point in trying to discover if it's an art. Art is a thing of the past. We need something else. You've got to watch light at work. It's light that creates. I sit down in front of my sheet of paper and I think."

Critic Herbert Molderings reminds us that with the passage of time and changing perspective it's almost impossible to see books like *Photographie N'est Pas L'Art* as they were seen upon first publication.[1] We lack historical and social context. We view them from a totally different perspective than both their creator and the public would have done in their day. Man Ray chose four of these images, in 1943, as some of his favorites amongst his own shots. Who today would spot the allusions they contain, such as his reference to Max Ernst's book *Histoire naturelle* in his depiction of a seahorse, or the link between Rayographs and automatic writing ? Man Ray's portfolio is an attack on theories about what the photographic process and camera eye actually is. It appeared at the same time as the final volume of John Dos

[1] Herbert Molderings' Nachwort in the Fotohof edition 2009 provides the most complete study of this work.

Passos' *U.S.A.* trilogy, in which the camera eye was central. Henry Miller was simultaneously using camera and dream sequences in his writing.

Man Ray's position on photography, by 1936, was one of frustration. It would be the primary source of his wealth and reputation for the rest of his life, just as it would for Brassaï. But both men had turned to it for pecunary reasons, and lamented that their painting and sculpture were frequently ignored. In later life, he gained greater peace with his primary reputation as a photographer.

Man Ray's ideas on photography are largely misunderstood. He saw a close connection between photography and music. He photographed not objects, but rather ideas and desires. He would even rather photograph a dream than an idea. He was, in the truest sense, a composer on film. To reproduce something was human, and usually banal, as he alludes to in this portfolio, but to create is Divine.

He saw painting as :

"...directed by the heart through the eye. Photography is directed by the mind through the eye. But desire and love for the subject direct both mediums."

Photography is Not Art is an important, but largely forgotten, staging post on his artistic and personal journey—awaiting discovery by a new generation. It encourages us to reconsider yet again what is photography and what is art, what is reality and what is illusion, what is truth and what is projection—and, how do all of these components fit into the psyche of those who change the way we see the world.

Karl Orend
Meudon

MAN RAY

LA PHOTOGRAPHIE N'EST PAS L'ART

12 PHOTOGRAPHIES

AVANT-PROPOS DE ANDRÉ BRETON

G L M 1937

MAN RAY
LA PHOTOGRAPHIE N'EST PAS L'ART
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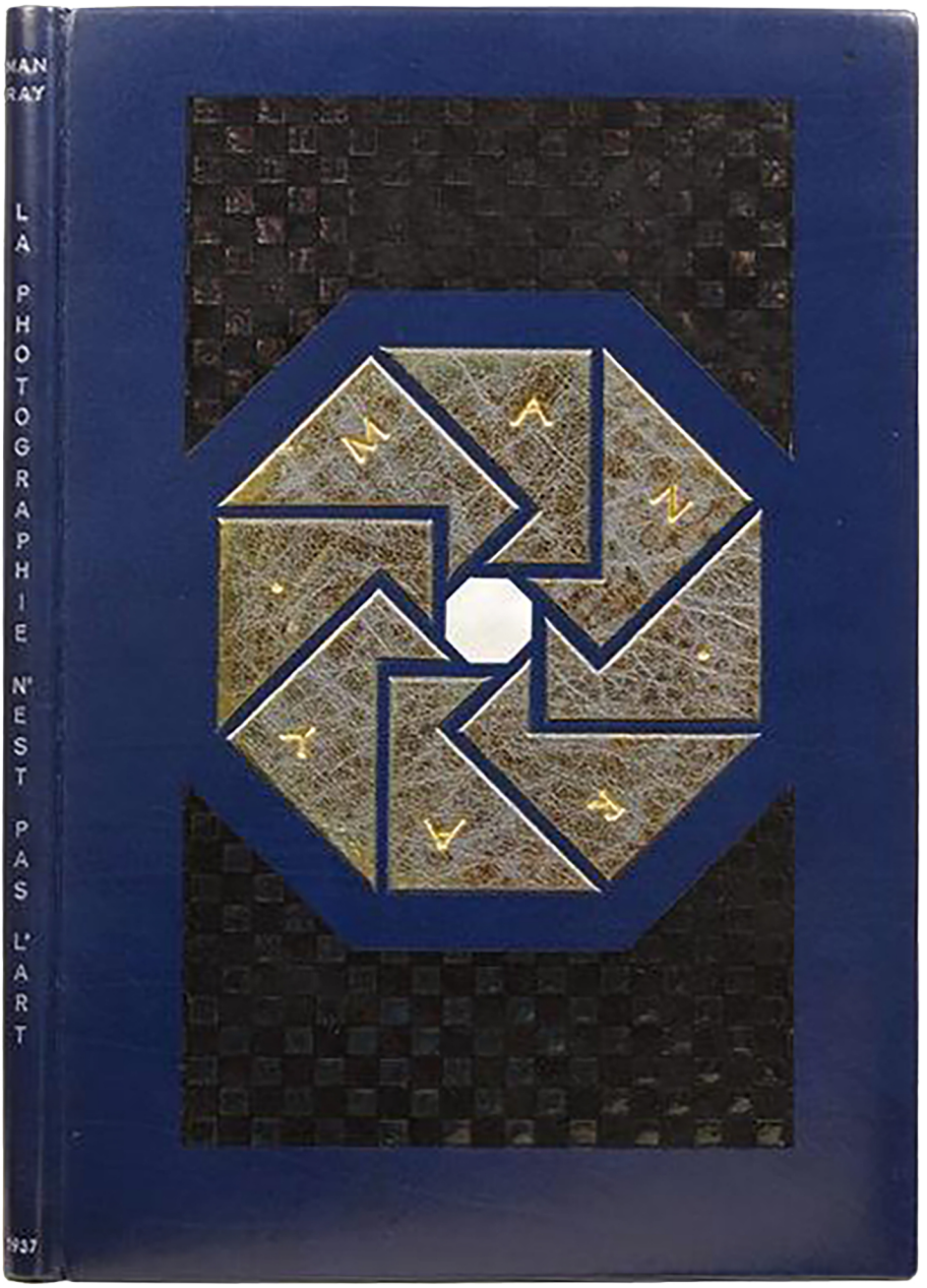
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LA PHOTOGRAPHIE N'EST PAS L'ART
1937
MAN RAY

MAN
RAY

PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT ART
BY
MAN RAY

translated by Karl Orend

was published in Toronto, Canada, on May first
2019
in a limited edition of twelve copies *hors commerce*,
signed by the translator.

This is copy_____.